



POLICY & PROCEDURE

PORTAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **OTHER TRAFFIC RELATED DUTIES**

SCOPE: All Department Personnel
DISTRIBUTION: Policy & Procedure Manual

REFERENCE: WI State Statutes: 346.215

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INDEX AS: Abandoned Vehicles
Assistance to Highway Users
Escort Services
Hazardous Highway Conditions
High Visibility Clothing
Traffic Direction and Control
Vehicle Unlocks

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure is to ensure the safe and efficient movement of motor vehicles and pedestrians within the City of Portage. The Portage Police Department will strive to reduce the incidence of traffic crashes and to provide for the orderly and safe flow of traffic.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. TRAFFIC DIRECTION
- II. SIGNALING CONTROL AIDS
- III. HIGH VISIBILITY CLOTHING
- IV. ESCORT SERVICES
- V. ASSISTANCE TO HIGHWAY USERS
- VI. ADVERSE HIGHWAY AND WEATHER CONDITIONS
- VII. ABANDONED VEHICLES

I. TRAFFIC DIRECTION

A. Manual Traffic Direction

1. Manual traffic direction will be performed by officers when necessary to ensure the safe efficient movement of motor vehicles and pedestrians. Circumstances and situations will dictate whether officers should direct traffic or permit the traffic to flow without assistance.
2. Traffic flow problems may occur due to any of the following:
 - a) Traffic light malfunction or downed stop sign.
 - b) Special event creating heavy traffic flow.
 - c) Traffic crash, fire scene.
 - d) Temporary road hazard or obstruction.

B. Manual Traffic Direction Procedures

In the event traffic control is needed, an officer assigned should maintain a professional attitude and demeanor while conducting traffic control duties.

The first step in the process is to select the proper location to establish operations. Several factors must be considered in selecting this location. They are:

- a) Design of the intersection,
 - b) Traffic patterns,
 - c) Lighting conditions, and
 - d) Degree of traffic control required.
2. The position of an officer should be selected with personal safety in mind. This position must be clearly visible to drivers and should not interfere with the flow of traffic. The point most commonly selected is the middle of the intersection. Intersection design may dictate that another spot be chosen. Some types of intersections requiring the location to be to one side or the other of center are:
 - a) A "T" type intersection,
 - b) A one-way street, and/or,
 - c) Unusually narrow roadway

3. Manual traffic direction by an officer will be handled in a manner that will enable drivers and pedestrians to easily recognize and respond to standardized, clearly visible and easily understood audible signals (traffic whistle) and visual signals (hand signals) from an officer.
4. When directing traffic, an officer should stand with their face or back toward the stopped traffic and their side toward traffic being directed to proceed. There are six basic signals for manual traffic control. They are:
 - a) **To stop traffic:** An officer shall extend their arm(s) outward with palm(s) towards the vehicle(s) to be stopped, and if the officer has a whistle, one long blast on the traffic whistle
 - b) **To start traffic:** An officer shall use the hand nearest the stream of traffic being directed to go. Holding the arm horizontal at shoulder height point, with the index finger at the vehicle(s) being directed, and if the officer has a whistle, two short blasts of the traffic whistle. Bending the elbow, bring the hand back in an arc to the front of chin to direct traffic to pass in front of the person directing traffic. Using the same procedure, bring the hand back behind the ear to direct traffic to pass in back of the person directing traffic.
 - c) **To change direction:** Use the stop signal to stop each stream of moving traffic separately. Turn 90 degrees. Keep both hands in the stop signal position. Give the go signal to each stream of traffic separately.
 - d) **Right turns:** The officer shall gesture to the driver of a vehicle turning right, to perform the turn by pointing at the driver and extending their arm toward the direction in which the turn is to be made.
 - e) **Left turns:** Left turns may be made only when there is a gap in the traffic flow or all cross traffic has been stopped. With the arm extended horizontally the officer shall point at the driver and swing the arm straight to point to where the driver is to go.

C. Manual Operation of Traffic Control Signals

1. Manual operation of traffic control signals may be initiated by officers under any of the following circumstances:
 - a) Special event causing excess traffic.
 - b) Traffic control signal malfunctions.
 - c) Traffic accident or other event affecting traffic movement.
2. Officers may put traffic control signals on all direction flash or all stop (4-way Stop).

3. When an officer places traffic control signals on flash (or lowers stop signs to be visible) in response to a malfunction with the signals, an incident report will be prepared and a copy sent to the department of public works outlining the circumstances of the failure.

D. Temporary Traffic Control Devices

1. Portable stop signs may be used as needed in the event of a signal malfunction or downed or missing stop sign.
2. In case of a major traffic disruption, portable stop signs, barricades etc. are available from the department of public works.

E. Special Events

1. Special events may necessitate involvement of the department for traffic direction and control. The department will provide necessary traffic direction and control in support of such pre-approved events.

F. Traffic Control at Fire Scenes

1. The primary duty of department personnel engaged in traffic direction at a fire scene is to maintain access for fire fighting vehicles and equipment, as well as limiting public access to the area.
2. The first officer(s) at the scene of a fire, shall position their vehicle(s) as to limit access to the area and coordinate their traffic and crowd control efforts with the fire department on-scene commander.
3. If it appears the firefighting efforts will be prolonged, the department of public works should be notified to barricade the streets involved.

II. SIGNALING CONTROL AIDS

- A. Use of signaling control aids may be necessary while conducting manual traffic control. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Traffic Whistle

- a) One long blast signals traffic to stop.
- b) Two short blasts signal traffic to proceed.
- c) Several short blasts should be used to gain attention.
- d) The whistle should be used as needed and **never** to indicate frustration or anger.

2. Voice

- a) Use a loud, professional tone.

3. Flashlight

- a) To stop traffic, swing the flashlight beam across the vehicle's path.
- b) Direct the beam at the pavement, being careful not to blind drivers.
- c) After a vehicle is stopped, use manual signals for further instructions.

III. HIGH VISIBILITY CLOTHING/SAFETY DEVICES

- A. Officers shall wear the department issued reflective traffic safety vests in conformance with ANSI II Standards when directing traffic. In the event of an immediate emergency, officers shall put on the reflective vest as soon as practical.
- B. Whenever possible, traffic wands and flashlights with cone shaped light diffusers should be used during night, dawn, and dusk lighting conditions.
- C. Flares may be positioned in the roadway or on the roadway edge in a manner that enhances visibility of the scene/ hazard and /or the officer directing traffic.
 1. Officers should remember to clear debris left behind from flares.

IV. ESCORT SERVICES

- A. Generally, all routine requests for escorts will be reviewed by a supervisor. Notwithstanding the exceptions noted in paragraph C below, officers may initiate escorts without specific authorization depending on circumstances. The use of the patrol vehicle emergency equipment will be left to the discretion of the officer performing the escort functions; however, all officers shall abide by the provisions of WI State Statute 346.215.
 1. Two (2) emergency vehicles shall be utilized for each escort; one at the front of the escort and one at the end of the escort. Emergency vehicles shall provide visual signals but are not required to provide audio signals unless needed.
 2. The operator of an emergency vehicle escorting a vehicle or procession of vehicles, and the operator of any vehicle being escorted, shall yield the right-of-way in accordance with WI State Statute 346.19 upon the approach of an authorized emergency vehicle giving an audible signal by siren.
- B. Examples of Approved Escorts
 1. Motorcades
 2. Public officials and dignitaries
 3. Oversized vehicles

4. Vehicles with hazardous or unusual cargo
 5. Convoys of vehicles
 6. Funerals
 7. Parades
 8. Other traffic occurrences requiring an escort
 9. Mutual aid of other emergency vehicles
- C. Required Information before Providing Escort
1. Actual trip and route approvals and permits if needed.
 2. Maximum and minimum speeds to be used.
 3. Appropriate traffic direction points along the route.
- D. The Department shall **not** provide escorts in the following circumstances:
1. Any person simply attempting to expedite their journey.
 2. Civilian vehicles transporting medical emergencies.
 3. Civilian vehicles following emergency vehicles.

V. ASSISTANCE TO HIGHWAY USERS

A. General Assistance

1. Officers should provide reasonable assistance to motorists in need of information or directions.
2. Officers should assist, or arrange help for motorists in need of fuel and/or transportation.

B. Vehicle Lock Out Services

1. Officers shall respond to vehicle lock out calls for service. Generally, Portage police department employees will only utilize lock out tools for emergency purposes such as a small child locked in the vehicle in extremely hot weather or upon supervisory approval in special circumstances. If circumstances allow, the officer will attempt to confirm verbally with the owner that the officer has permission to attempt to open the vehicle knowing there is a potential for damage.
2. Officers should conduct a registration check and/or other measures to ensure the person is entitled access to the vehicle and that there is a true emergency.

3. Officers may assist by providing information regarding the availability of a locksmith or towing service for unlocking the vehicle.
4. If possible the officer should standby for the arrival of the locksmith or towing service, until the officer's services are no longer needed.
5. In an emergency, the officer shall affect entry to the vehicle in the safest and most expeditious manner possible.

C. Mechanical or Towing Services to Motorists

1. If a towing service is needed or requested, an officer shall ask the operator for a towing service preference. If there is no preference, the next available towing service on the towing list shall be contacted via dispatch.
2. Officers should avoid trying to help a motorist beyond their training or experience in regards to disabled vehicles.
3. Police vehicles should not be used for pushing, towing or jump starting disabled vehicles, except in emergencies.

D. Medical and Fire Assistance to Motorists

1. Officers who encounter motorists in need of EMS shall treat to their level of training and request EMS.
2. Officers who encounter motorists in need of fire protection services shall ensure that persons are removed from immediate danger and request fire personnel. Officers are cautioned that vehicle fires present special hazardous situations especially with hybrid and electric models including explosion, release of toxic fumes, delayed air bag explosion, and spontaneous propulsion of front or rear bumpers.

VI. ADVERSE HIGHWAY AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

A. Adverse road and weather conditions may include, but are not limited to:

1. Accidental hazards, such as debris that has fallen on the roadway from another vehicle.
2. Downed power lines.
3. Fallen trees.
4. Acts of nature such as fog, flooding, ice or snow on roadway etc.

B. Upon discovering or being sent to an adverse road or weather condition affecting safe roadway travel, officers are expected to request the help needed to remedy the hazard.

- C. Department personnel shall provide traffic direction and control services in the vicinity of adverse road conditions, if appropriate, and shall do so with great caution and be aware circumstances and conditions can change quickly.

VII. ABANDONED VEHICLES

- A. When an officer receives a report of an abandoned vehicle:
- 1) The officer shall determine the owner, attempt contact with the owner and the status of the vehicle ie. stolen. Why is the vehicle considered abandoned?
 - 2) If the vehicle is on private property, the officer will determine if an ordinance violation exists and take appropriate action as needed. The owner of the property can have the vehicle towed if they wish at their expense. A copy of the report should be forwarded to the CSO's
 - 3) If an officer finds the abandoned vehicle parked legally on the roadway the officer depending on the circumstances may tag the vehicle with a warning to be moved within 24 hours as per ordinance. After 24 hours, the vehicle can be ticketed and/or towed. A copy of the report will be forwarded to the CSO's for follow up.
 - 4) If an officer finds the vehicle abandoned in an unsafe circumstance, i.e. in the roadway, leaking fluids, etc. the officer may request fire for the fluids and have the vehicle towed. A citation should be issued for the appropriate offense.
 - 5) The officer shall make reasonable efforts to notify the registered owner of the vehicle as to which tow company has the vehicle and the vehicle's current location. The owner shall also be notified of the date, time, and location the vehicle was towed from, as well as the reason for the vehicle's removal and any possible charges. Photographs of the vehicle in violation should be considered for evidentiary purposes prior to towing.
 - 6) A report shall be completed when a vehicle is towed. An inventory of the vehicle and additional photographs may be taken based upon the circumstances.

Keith J. Klafke
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all previous written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

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